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Author: Chretien DeTroyes

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FOUR ARTHURIAN ROMANCES:

"EREC ET ENIDE", "CLIGES", "YVAIN", AND "LANCELOT"

by Chretien DeTroyes

Fl. 12th Century A.D.

Originally written in Old French, sometime in the second half of the 12th Century A.D., by the court poet Chretien DeTroyes.

Contents

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

INTRODUCTION

EREC ET ENIDE

CLIGES

YVAIN

LANCELOT

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

ORIGINAL TEXT—

Carroll, Carleton W. (Ed.): "Chretien DeTroyes: Erec and Enide" (Garland Library of Medieval Literature, New York & London, 1987). Edited with a translation (see Penguin Classics edition below).

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Owen, D.D.R (Trans.): "Chretien DeTroyes: Arthurian Romances" (Everyman Library, London, 1987). Contains translations of "Erec et Enide", "Cliges", "Yvain", "Lancelot", and DeTroyes' incomplete "Perceval". NOTE: This edition replaced W.W. Comfort's in the Everyman Library catalogue. Highly recommended.

RECOMMENDED READING—

Anonymous: "Lancelot of the Lake" (Trans: Corin Corely; Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989). English translation of one of the earliest prose romances concerning Lancelot.

Anonymous: "The Mabinogion" (Ed: Jeffrey Gantz; Penguin Classics, London, 1976). Contains a translation of "Geraint and Enid", an earlier Welsh version of "Erec et Enide".

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Malory, Sir Thomas: "Le Morte D'Arthur" (Ed: Janet Cowen; Penguin Classics, London, 1969).

INTRODUCTION

Chretien De Troyes has had the peculiar fortune of becoming the best known of the old French poets to students of mediaeval literature, and of remaining practically unknown to any one else. The acquaintance of students with the work of Chretien has been made possible in academic circles by the admirable critical editions of his romances undertaken and carried to completion during the past thirty years by Professor Wendelin Foerster of Bonn. At the same time the want of public familiarity with Chretien's work is due to the almost complete lack of translations of his romances into the modern tongues. The man who, so far as we know, first recounted the romantic adventures of Arthur's knights, Gawain. Yvain, Erec, Lancelot, and Perceval, has been forgotten; whereas posterity has been kinder to his debtors, Wolfram yon Eschenbach, Malory, Lord Tennyson, and Richard Wagner. The present volume has grown out of the desire to place these romances of adventure before the reader of English in a prose version based directly upon the oldest form in which they exist.

Such extravagant claims for Chretien's art have been made in some quarters that one feels disinclined to give them even an echo here. The modem reader may form his own estimate of the poet's art, and that estimate will probably not be high. Monotony, lack of proportion, vain repetitions, insufficient motivation, wearisome subtleties, and threatened, if not actual, indelicacy are among the most salient defects which will arrest, and mayhap confound, the reader unfamiliar with mediaeval literary craft. No greater service can be performed by an editor in such a case than to prepare the reader to overlook these common faults, and to set before him the literary significance of this twelfth-century poet.

Chretien de Troyes wrote in Champagne during the third quarter of the twelfth century. Of his life we know neither the beginning nor the end, but we know that between 1160 and 1172 he lived, perhaps as herald-at-arms (according to Gaston Paris, based on "Lancelot" 5591-94) at Troyes, where was the court of his patroness, the Countess Marie de Champagne. She was the daughter of Louis VII, and of that famous Eleanor of Aquitaine, as she is called in English histories, who, coming from the South of France in 1137, first to Paris and later to England, may have had some share in the introduction of those ideals of courtesy and woman service which were soon to become the cult of European society. The Countess Marie, possessing her royal mother's tastes and gifts, made of her court a social experiment station, where these Provencal ideals of a perfect society were planted afresh in congenial soil. It appears from contemporary testimony that the authority of this celebrated feudal dame was weighty, and widely felt. The old city of Troyes, where she held her court, must be set down large in any map of literary history. For it was there that Chretien was led to write four romances which together form the most complete expression we possess from a single author of the ideals of French chivalry. These romances, written in eight-syllable rhyming couplets, treat respectively of Erec and Enide, Cliges, Yvain, and Lancelot. Another poem, "Perceval le Gallois", was composed about 1175 for Philip, Count of Flanders, to whom Chretien was attached during his last years. This last poem is not included in the present translation because of its extraordinary length of 32,000 verses, because Chretien wrote only the first 9000 verses, and because Miss Jessie L. Weston has given us an English version of Wolfram's well-known "Parzival", which tells substantially the same story, though in a different spirit. To have included this poem, of which he wrote less than one-third, in the works of Chretien would have been unjust to him. It is true the romance of "Lancelot" was not completed by Chretien, we are told, but the poem is his in such large part that one would be over-scrupulous not to call it his. The other three poems mentioned are his entire. In addition, there are quite generally assigned to the poet two insignificant lyrics, the pious romance of "Guillaume d'Angleterre", and the elaboration of an episode from Ovid's "Metamorphoses" (vi., 426-674) called "Philomena" by its recent editor (C. de Boer, Paris, 1909). All these are extant and accessible. But since "Guillaume d'Angleterre" and "Philomena" are not universally attributed to Chretien, and since they have nothing to do with the Arthurian material, it seems reasonable to limit the present enterprise to "Erec and Enide", "Cliges", "Yvain", and "Lancelot".

Professor Foerster, basing his remark upon the best knowledge we possess of an obscure matter, has called "Erec and Enide" the oldest Arthurian romance extant. It is not possible to dispute this significant claim, but let us make it a little more intelligible. Scholarship has shown that from the early Middle Ages popular

tradition was rife in Britain and Brittany. The existence of these traditions common to the Brythonic peoples was called to the attention of the literary world by William of Malmesbury ("Gesta regum Anglorum") and Geoffrey of Monmouth ("Historia regum Britanniae") in their Latin histories about 1125 and 1137 respectively, and by the Anglo-Norman poet Wace immediately afterward. Scholars have waged war over the theories of transmission of the so-called Arthurian material during the centuries which elapsed between the time of the fabled chieftain's activity in 500 A.D. and his appearance as a great literary personage in the twelfth century. Documents are lacking for the dark ages of popular tradition before the Norman Conquest, and the theorists may work their will. But Arthur and his knights, as we see them in the earliest French romances, have little in common with their Celtic prototypes, as we dimly catch sight of them in Irish, Welsh, and Breton legend. Chretien belonged to a generation of French poets who rook over a great mass of Celtic folk-lore they imperfectly understood, and made of what, of course, it had never been before: the vehicle to carry a rich freight of chivalric customs and ideals. As an ideal of social conduct, the code of chivalry never touched the middle and lower classes, but it was the religion of the aristocracy and of the twelfth-century "honnete homme". Never was literature in any age closer to the ideals of a social class. So true is this that it is difficult to determine whether social practices called forth the literature, or whether, as in the case of the seventeenth-century pastoral romance in France, it is truer to say that literature suggested to society its ideals. Be that as it may, it is proper to observe that the French romances of adventure portray late mediaeval aristocracy as it fain would be. For the glaring inconsistencies between the reality and the ideal, one may turn to the chronicles of the period. Yet, even history tells of many an ugly sin rebuked and of many a gallant deed performed because of the courteous ideals of chivalry. The debt of our own social code to this literature of courtesy and frequent self-sacrifice is perfectly manifest.

What Chretien's immediate and specific source was for his romances is of deep interest to the student. Unfortunately, he has left us in doubt. He speaks in the vaguest way of the materials he used. There is no evidence that he had any Celtic written source. We are thus thrown back upon Latin or French literary originals which are lost, or upon current continental lore going back to a Celtic source. This very difficult problem is as yet unsolved in the case of Chretien, as it is in the case of the Anglo-Norman Beroul, who wrote of Tristan about 1150. The material evidently was at hand and Chretien appropriated it, without much understanding of its primitive spirit, but appreciating it as a setting for the ideal society dreamed of but not realised in his own day. Add to this literary perspicacity, a good foundation in classic fable, a modicum of ecclesiastical doctrine, a remarkable facility in phrase, figure, and rhyme and we have the foundations for Chretien's art as we shall find it upon closer examination.

A French narrative poet of the twelfth century had three categories of subject-matter from which to choose: legends connected with the history of France ("matiere de France"), legends connected with Arthur and other Celtic heroes ("matiere de Bretagne"), and stories culled from the history or mythology of Greece and Rome, current in Latin and French translations ("matiere de Rome la grant"). Chretien tells us in "Cliges" that his first essays as a poet were the translations into French of certain parts of Ovid's most popular works: the "Metamorphoses", the "Ars Amatoria", and perhaps the "Remedia Amoris". But he appears early to

have chosen as his special field the stories of Celtic origin dealing with Arthur, the Round Table, and other features of Celtic folk-lore. Not only was he alive to the literary interest of this material when rationalised to suit the taste of French readers; his is further the credit of having given to somewhat crude folk-lore that polish and elegance which is peculiarly French, and which is inseparably associated with the Arthurian legends in all modern literature. Though Beroul, and perhaps other poets, had previously based romantic poems upon individual Celtic heroes like Tristan, nevertheless to Chretien, so far as we can see, is due the considerable honour of having constituted Arthur's court as a literary centre and rallying-point for an innumerable company of knights and ladies engaged in a never-ending series of amorous adventures and dangerous quests. Rather than unqualifiedly attribute to Chretien this important literary convention, one should bear in mind that all his poems imply familiarity on the part of his readers with the heroes of the court of which he speaks. One would suppose that other stories, told before his versions, were current. Some critics would go so far as to maintain that Chretien came toward the close, rather than at the beginning, of a school of French writers of Arthurian romances. But, if so, we do not possess these earlier versions, and for lack of rivals Chretien may be hailed as an innovator in the current schools of poetry.

And now let us consider the faults which a modern reader will not be slow to detect in Chretien's style. Most of his salient faults are common to all mediaeval narrative literature. They may be ascribed to the extraordinary leisure of the class for whom it was composed—a class which was always ready to read an old story told again, and which would tolerate any description, however detailed. The pastimes of this class of readers were jousting, hunting, and making love. Hence the preponderance of these matters in the literature of its leisure hours. No detail of the joust or hunt was unfamiliar or unwelcome to these readers; no subtle arguments concerning the art of love were too abstruse to delight a generation steeped in amorous casuistry and allegories. And if some scenes seem to us indelicate, yet after comparison with other authors of his times, Chretien must be let off with a light sentence. It is certain he intended to avoid what was indecent, as did the writers of narrative poetry in general. To appreciate fully the chaste treatment of Chretien one must know some other forms of mediaeval literature, such as the fabliaux, farces, and morality plays, in which courtesy imposed no restraint. For our poet's lack of sense of proportion, and for his carelessness in the proper motivation of many episodes, no apology can be made. He is not always guilty; some episodes betoken poetic mastery. But a poet acquainted, as he was, with some first-class Latin poetry, and who had made a business of his art, ought to have handled his material more intelligently, even in the twelfth century. The emphasis is not always laid with discrimination, nor is his yarn always kept free of tangles in the spinning.

Reference has been made to Chretien's use of his sources. The tendency of some critics has been to minimise the French poet's originality by pointing out striking analogies in classic and Celtic fable. Attention has been especially directed to the defence of the fountain and the service of a fairy mistress in "Yvain", to the captivity of Arthur's subjects in the kingdom of Gorre, as narrated in "Lancelot", reminding one so insistently of the treatment of the kingdom of Death from which some god or hero finally delivers those in durance, and to the reigned death of Fenice in "Cliges", with its many variants. These episodes are but examples of

parallels which will occur to the observant reader. The difficult point to determine, in speaking of conceptions so widespread in classic and mediaeval literature, is the immediate source whence these conceptions reached Chretien. The list of works of reference appended to this volume will enable the student to go deeper into this much debated question, and will permit us to dispense with an examination of the arguments in this place. However, such convincing parallels for many of Chretien's fairy and romantic episodes have been adduced by students of Irish and Welsh legend that one cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that Chretien was in touch, either by oral or literary tradition, with the populations of Britain and of Brittany, and that we have here his most immediate inspiration. Professor Foerster, stoutly opposing the so-called Anglo-Norman theory which supposes the existence of lost Anglo-Norman romances in French as the sources of Chretien de Troyes, is, nevertheless, well within the truth when he insists upon what is, so far as we are concerned, the essential originality of the French poet. The general reader will to-day care as little as did the reader of the twelfth century how the poet came upon the motives and episodes of his stories, whether he borrowed them or invented them himself. Any poet should be judged not as a "finder" but as a "user" of the common stock of ideas. The study of sources of mediaeval poetry, which is being so doggedly carried on by scholars, may well throw light upon the main currents of literary tradition, but it casts no reflection, favourable or otherwise, upon the personal art of the poet in handling his stuff. On that count he may plead his own cause before the jury.

Chretien's originality, then, consists in his portrayal of the social ideal of the French aristocracy in the twelfth century. So far as we know he was the first to create in the vulgar tongues a vast court, where men and women lived in conformity with the rules of courtesy, where the truth was told, where generosity was open-handed, where the weak and the innocent were protected by men who dedicated themselves to the cult of honour and to the quest of a spotless reputation. Honour and love combined to engage the attention of this society; these were its religion in a far more real sense than was that of the Church. Perfection was attainable under this code of ethics: Gawain, for example, was a perfect knight. Though the ideals of this court and those of Christianity are in accord at many points, vet courtly love and Christian morality are irreconcilable. This Arthurian material, as used by Chretien, is fundamentally immoral as judged by Christian standards. Beyond question, the poets and the public alike knew this to be the case, and therein lay its charm for a society in which the actual relations or the sexes were rigidly prescribed by the Church and by feudal practice, rather than by the sentiments of the individuals concerned. The passionate love of Tristan for Iseut, of Lancelot for Guinevere, of Cliges for Fenice, fascinate the conventional Christian society of the twelfth century and of the twentieth century alike, but there-is only one name among men for such relations as theirs, and neither righteousness nor reason lie that way. Even Tennyson, in spite of all he has done to spiritualise this material, was compelled to portray the inevitable dissolution and ruin of Arthur's court. Chretien well knew the difference between right and wrong, between reason and passion, as the reader of "Cliges" may learn for himself. Fenice was not Iseut, and she would not have her Cliges to be a Tristan. Infidelity, if you will, but not "menage a trois". Both "Erec" and "Yvain" present a conventional morality. But "Lancelot" is flagrantly immoral, and the poet is careful to state that for this particular romance he is indebted to his patroness

Marie de Champagne. He says it was she who furnished him with both the "matiere" and the "san", the material of the story and its method of treatment.

Scholars have sought to fix the chronology of the poet's works, and have been tempted to speculate upon the evolution of his literary and moral ideas. Professor Foerster's chronology is generally accepted, and there is little likelihood of his being in error when he supposes Chretien's work to have been done as follows: the lost "Tristan" (the existence of which is denied by Gaston Paris in "Journal des Savants", 1902, pp. 297 f.), "Erec and Enide", "Cliges", "Lancelot", "Yvain", "Perceval". The arguments for this chronology, based upon external as well as internal criticism, may be found in the Introductions to Professor Foerster's recent editions. When we speculate upon the development of Chretien's moral ideas we are not on such sure ground. As we have seen, his standards vary widely in the different romances. How much of this variation is due to chance circumstance imposed by the nature of his subject or by the taste of his public, and how much to changing conviction it is easy to see, when we consider some contemporary novelist, how dangerous it is to judge of moral convictions as reflected in literary work. "Lancelot" must be the keystone of any theory constructed concerning the moral evolution of Chretien. The following supposition is tenable, if the chronology of Foerster is correct. After the works of his youth, consisting of lyric poems and translations embodying the ideals of Ovid and of the school of contemporary troubadour poets, Chretien took up the Arthurinn material and started upon a new course. "Erec" is the oldest Arthurinn romance to have survived in any language, but it is almost certainly not the first to have been written. It is a perfectly clean story: of love, estrangement, and reconciliation in the persons of Erec and his charming sweetheart Enide. The psychological analysis of Erec's motives in the rude testing of Enide is worthy of attention, and is more subtle than anything previous in French literature with which we are acquainted. The poem is an episodical romance in the biography of an Arthurinn hero, with the usual amount of space given to his adventures. "Cliges" apparently connects a Byzantine tale of doubtful origin in an arbitrary fashion with the court of Arthur. It is thought that the story embodies the same motive as the widespread tale of the deception practised upon Solomon by his wife, and that Chretien's source, as he himself claims, was literary (cf. Gaston Paris in "Journal des Savants", 1902, pp. 641-655). The scene where Fenice feigns death in order to rejoin her lover is a parallel of many others in literary history, and will, of course, suggest the situation in Romeo and Juliet. This romance well illustrates the drawing power of Arthur's court as a literary centre, and its use as a rallying-point for courteous knights of whatever extraction. The poem has been termed an "Anti-Tristan", because of its disparaging reference to the love of Tristan and Iseut, which, it is generally supposed, had been narrated by Chretien in his earlier years. Next may come "Lancelot", with its significant dedication to the Countess of Champagne. Of all the poet's work, this tale of the rescue of Guinevere by her lover seems to express most closely the ideals of Marie's court ideals in which devotion and courtesy but thinly disguise free love. "Yvain" is a return to the poet's natural bent, in an episodical romance, while "Perceval" crowns his production with its pure and exalted note, though without a touch of that religious mysticism which later marked Wolfram yon Eschenbach's "Parzival". "Guillaime d'Angleterre" is a pseudo-historical romance of adventure in which the worldly distresses and the final reward of piety are conventionally exposed. It is uninspired, its place is

difficult to determine, and its authorship is questioned by some. It is aside from the Arthurian material, and there is no clue to its place in the evolution of Chretien's art, if indeed it be his work.

A few words must be devoted to Chretien's place in the history of mediaeval narrative poetry. The heroic epic songs of France, devoted either to the conflict of Christendom under the leadership of France against the Saracens, or else to the strife and rivalry of French vassals among themselves, had been current for perhaps a century before our poet began to write. These epic poems, of which some three score have survived, portray a warlike, virile, unsentimental feudal society, whose chief occupation was fighting, and whose dominant ideals were faith in God, loyalty to feudal family ties, and bravery in battle. Woman's place is comparatively obscure, and of love-making there is little said. It is a poetry of vigorous manhood, of uncompromising morality, and of hard knocks given and taken for God, for Christendom, and the King of France. This poetry is written in ten- or twelve- syllable verses grouped, at first in assonanced, later in rhymed, "tirades" of unequal length. It was intended for a society which was still homogeneous, and to it at the outset doubtless all classes of the population listened with equal interest. As poetry it is monotonous, without sense of proportion, padded to facilitate memorisation by professional reciters, and unadorned by figure, fancy, or imagination. Its pretention to historic accuracy begot prosaicness in its approach to the style of the chronicles. But its inspiration was noble, its conception of human duties was lofty. It gives a realistic portrayal of the age which produced it, the age of the first crusades, and to this day we would choose as our models of citizenship Roland and Oliver rather than Tristan and Lancelot. The epic poems, dealing with the pseudo-historical characters who had fought in civil and foreign wars under Charlemagne, remained the favourite literary pabulum of the middle classes until the close of the thirteenth century. Professor Bedier is at present engaged in explaining the extraordinary hold which these poems had upon the public, and in proving that they exercised a distinct function when exploited by the Church throughout the period of the crusades to celebrate local shrines and to promote muscular Christianity. But the refinement which began to penetrate the ideals of the French aristocracy about the middle of the twelfth century craved a different expression in narrative literature. Greek and Roman mythology and history were seized upon with some effect to satisfy the new demand. The "Roman de Thebes", the "Roman d'Alexandre", the "Roman de Troie", and its logical continuation, the "Roman d'Eneas", are all twelfth-century attempts to clothe classic legend in the dress of mediaeval chivalry. But better fitted to satisfy the new demand was the discovery by the alert Anglo-Normans perhaps in Brittany, perhaps in the South of England, of a vast body of legendary material which, so far as we know, had never before this century received any elaborate literary treatment. The existence of the literary demand and this discovery of the material for its prompt satisfaction is one of the most remarkable coincidences in literary history. It would seem that the pride of the Celtic populations in a Celtic hero, aided and abetted by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who first showed the romantic possibilities of the material, made of the obscure British chieftain Arthur a world conqueror. Arthur thus became already in Geoffrey's "Historia regum Britaniae" a conscious protagonist of Charlemagne and his rival in popularity. This grandiose conception of Arthur persisted in England, but this conception of the British chieftain did not interest the French. For Chretien Arthur had no political

significance. He is simply the arbiter of his court in all affairs of justice and courtesy. Charlemagne's very realistic entourage of virile and busy barons is replaced by a court of elegant chevaliers and unemployed ladies. Charlemagne's setting is historical and geographical; Arthur's setting is ideal and in the air. In the oldest epic poems we find only God-fearing men and a few self-effacing women; in the Arthurian romances we meet gentlemen and ladies, more elegant and seductive than any one in the epic poems, but less fortified by faith and sense of duty against vice because breathing an enervating atmosphere of leisure and decadent morally. Though the Church made the attempt in "Parzival", it could never lay its hands so effectively upon this Celtic material, because it contained too many elements which were root and branch inconsistent with the essential teachings of Christianity. A fleeting comparison of the noble end of Charlemagne's Peers fighting for their God and their King at Ronceval with the futile and dilettante careers of Arthur's knights in joust and hunt, will show better than mere words where the difference lies.

The student of the history of social and moral ideals will find much to interest him in Chretien's romances. Mediaeval references show that he was held by his immediate successors, as he is held to-day when fairly viewed, to have been a master of the art of story-telling. More than any other single narrative poet, he was taken as a model both in France and abroad. Professor F. M. Warren has set forth in detail the finer points in the art of poetry as practised by Chretien and his contemporary craftsmen (see "Some Features of Style in Early French Narrative Poetry, 1150-1170 in "Modern Philology", iii., 179-209; iii., 513-539; iv., 655-675). Poets in his own land refer to him with reverence, and foreign poets complimented him to a high degree by direct translation and by embroidering upon the themes which he had made popular. The knights made famous by Chretien soon crossed the frontiers and obtained rights of citizenship in counties so diverse as Germany, England, Scandinavia, Holland, Italy, and to a lesser extent in Spain and Portugal. The inevitable tendency of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to reduce poetry to prose affected the Arthurian material; vast prose compilations finally embodied in print the matter formerly expressed in verse, and it was in this form that the stories were known to later generations until revived interest in the Middle Ages brought to light the manuscripts in verse.

Aside from certain episodes of Chretien's romances, the student will be most interested in the treatment of love as therein portrayed. On this topic we may hear speaking the man of his time. "Cliges" contains the body of Chretien's doctrine of love, while Lancelot is his most perfect lover. His debt to Ovid has not yet been indicated with sufficient preciseness. An elaborate code to govern sentiment and its expression was independently developed by the troubadours of Provence in the early twelfth century. These Provencal ideals of the courtly life were carried into Northern France partly as the result of a royal marriage in 1137 and of the crusade of 1147, and there by such poets as Chretien they were gathered up and fused with the Ovidian doctrine into a highly complicated but perfectly definite statement of the ideal relations of the sexes. Nowhere in the vulgar tongues can a better statement of these relations be found than in "Cliges."

So we leave Chretien to speak across the ages for himself and his generation. He is to be read as a story-teller rather than as a poet, as a casuist rather than as a philosopher. But when all deductions are made, his significance as a literary artist and as the founder of a precious literary tradition distinguishes him from all other

poets of the Latin races between the close of the Empire and the arrival of Dante.

—W. W. COMFORT.

EREC ET ENIDE [11]

(Vv. 1-26.) The rustic's proverb says that many a thing is despised that is worth much more than is supposed. Therefore he does well who makes the most of whatever intelligence he may possess. For he who neglects this concern may likely omit to say something which would subsequently give great pleasure. So Chretien de Troyes maintains that one ought always to study and strive to speak well and teach the right; and he derives from a story of adventure a pleasing argument whereby it may be proved and known that he is not wise who does not make liberal use of his knowledge so long as God may give him grace. The story is about Erec the son of Lac—a story which those who earn a living by telling stories are accustomed to mutilate and spoil in the presence of kings and counts. And now I shall begin the tale which will be remembered so long as Christendom endures. This is Chretien's boast.

(Vv. 27-66.) One Easter Day in the Springtime, King Arthur held court in his town of Cardigan. Never was there seen so rich a court; for many a good knight was there, hardy, bold, and brave, and rich ladies and damsels, gentle and fair daughters of kings. But before the court was disbanded, the King told his knights that he wished to hunt the White Stag, [12] in order to observe worthily the ancient custom. When my lord Gawain heard this, he was sore displeased, and said: "Sire, you will derive neither thanks nor goodwill from this hunt. We all know long since what this custom of the White Stag is: whoever can kill the White Stag must forsooth kiss the fairest maiden of your court, come what may. But of this there might come great ill, for there are here five hundred damsels of high birth, gentle and prudent daughters of kings, and there is none of them but has a bold and valiant knight for her lover who would be ready to contend, whether fight or wrong, that she who is his lady is the fairest and gentlest of them all." The King replies: "That I know well; yet will I not desist on that account; for a king's word ought never to be gainsaid. To-morrow morning we shall all gaily go to hunt the White Stag in the forest of adventure. And very delightful this hunt will be."

(Vv. 67-114.) And so the affair is arranged for the next morning at daybreak. The morrow, as soon as it is day, the King gets up and dresses, and dons a short jacket for his forest ride. He commands the knights to be aroused and the horses to be made ready. Already they are ahorse, and off they go, with bows and arrows. After them the Queen mounts her horse, taking a damsel with her. A maid she was, the daughter of a king, and she rode a white palfrey. After them there swiftly followed a knight, named Erec, who belonged to the Round Table, and had great fame at the court. [13] Of all the knights that ever were there, never one received such praise; and he was so fair that nowhere in the world need one seek a fairer knight than he. He was very fair, brave, and courteous, though not yet twenty-five years old. Never was there a man of his age of greater knighthood. And what shall

I say of his virtues? Mounted on his horse, and clad in an ermine mantle, he came galloping down the road, wearing a coat of splendid flowered silk which was made at Constantinople. He had put on hose of brocade, well made and cut, and when his golden spurs were well attached, he sat securely in his stirrups. He carried no arm with him but his sword. As he galloped along, at the corner of a street he came up with the Queen, and said: "My lady, if it please you, I should gladly accompany you along this road, having come for no other purpose than to bear you company." And the Queen thanks him: "Fair friend, I like your company well, in truth; for better I could not have."

(Vv. 115-124.) Then they ride along at full speed until they come into the forest, where the party who had gone before them had already started the stag. Some wind the horns and others shout; the hounds plunge ahead after the stag, running, attacking, and baying; the bowmen shoot amain. And before them all rode the King on a Spanish hunter.

(Vv. 125-154.) Queen Guinevere was in the wood listening for the dogs; beside her were Erec and the damsel, who was very courteous and fair. But those who had pursued the stag were so far from them that, however intently they might listen to catch the sound of horn or baying of hound, they no longer could hear either horse, huntsman, or hound. So all three of them drew rein in a clearing beside the road. They had been there but a short time when they saw an armed knight along on his steed, with shield slung about his neck, and his lance in hand. The Queen espied him from a distance By his right side rode a damsel of noble bearing, and before them, on a hack, came a dwarf carrying in his hand a knotted scourge. When Queen Guinevere saw the comely and graceful knight, she desired to know who he and his damsel were. So she bid her damsel go quickly and speak to him.

(Vv. 155-274.) "Damsel," says the Queen, "go and bid yonder knight come to me and bring his damsel with him." The maiden goes on amble straight toward the knight. But the spiteful dwarf sallies forth to meet her with his scourge in hand, crying: "Halt, maiden, what do you want here? You shall advance no farther." "Dwarf," says she, "let me pass. I wish to speak with yonder knight; for the Queen sends me hither." The dwarf, who was rude and mean, took his stand in the middle of the road, and said: "You have no business here. Go back. It is not meet that you should speak to so excellent a knight." The damsel advanced and tried to pass him by force, holding the dwarf in slight esteem when she saw that he was so small. Then the dwarf raised his whip, when he saw her coming toward him and tried to strike her in the face. She raised her arm to protect herself, but he lifted his hand again and struck her all unprotected on her bare hand: and so hard did he strike her on the back of her hand that it turned all black and blue. When the maiden could do nothing else, in spite of herself she must needs return. So weeping she turned back. The tears came to her eyes and ran down her cheeks. When the Queen sees her damsel wounded, she is sorely grieved and angered and knows not what to do. "Ah, Erec, fair friend," she says, "I am in great sorrow for my damsel whom that dwarf has wounded. The knight must be discourteous indeed, to allow such a monster to strike so beautiful a creature. Erec, fair friend, do you go to the knight and bid him come to me without delay. I wish to know him and his lady." Erec starts off thither, giving spurs to his steed, and rides straight toward the knight. The ignoble dwarf sees him coming and goes to meet him. "Vassal," says he, "stand back! For I know not what business you have here. I

advise you to withdraw." "Avaunt," says Erec, "provoking dwarf! Thou art vile and troublesome. Let me pass." "You shall not." "That will I." "You shall not." Erec thrusts the dwarf aside. The dwarf had no equal for villainy: he gave him a great blow with his lash right on the neck, so that Erec's neck and face are scarred with the blow of the scourge; from top to bottom appear the lines which the thongs have raised on him. He knew well that he could not have the satisfaction of striking the dwarf; for he saw that the knight was armed, arrogant, and of evil intent, and he was afraid that he would soon kill him, should he strike the dwarf in his presence. Rashness is not bravery. So Erec acted wisely in retreating without more ado. "My lady," he says, "now matters stand worse; for the rascally dwarf has so wounded me that he has badly cut my face. I did not dare to strike or touch him; but none ought to reproach me, for I was completely unarmed. I mistrusted the armed knight, who, being an ugly fellow and violent, would take it as no jest, and would soon kill me in his pride. But this much I will promise you; that if I can, I shall yet avenge my disgrace, or increase it. But my arms are too far away to avail me in this time of need; for at Cardigan did I leave them this morning when I came away. And if I should go to fetch them there, peradventure I should never again find the knight who is riding off apace. So I must follow him at once, far or near, until I find some arms to hire or borrow. If I find some one who will lend me arms, the knight will quickly find me ready for battle. And you may be sure without fail that we two shall fight until he defeat me, or I him. And if possible, I shall be back by the third day, when you will see me home again either joyous or sad, I know not which. Lady, I cannot delay longer, for I must follow after the knight. I go. To God I commend you." And the Queen in like manner more than five hundred rimes commends him to God, that he may defend him from harm.

(Vv. 275-310.) Erec leaves the Queen and ceases not to pursue the knight. The Queen remains in the wood, where now the King had come up with the Stag. The King himself outstripped the others at the death. Thus they killed and took the White Stag, and all returned, carrying the Stag, till they came again to Cardigan. After supper, when the knights were all in high spirits throughout the hall, the King, as the custom was, because he had taken the Stag, said that he would bestow the kiss and thus observe the custom of the Stag. Throughout the court a great murmur is heard: each one vows and swears to his neighbour that it shall not be done without the protest of sword or ashen lance. Each one gallantly desires to contend that his lady is the fairest in the hall. Their conversation bodes no good, and when my lord Gawain heard it, you must know that it was not to his liking. Thus he addressed the King: "Sire," he says, "your knights here are greatly aroused, and all their talk is of this kiss. They say that it shall never be bestowed without disturbance and a fight." And the King wisely replied to him: "Fair nephew Gawain, give me counsel now, sparing my honour and my dignity, for I have no mind for any disturbance."

(Vv. 311-341.) To the council came a great part of the best knights of the court. King Yder [14] arrived, who was the first to be summoned, and after him King Cadoalant, who was very wise and bold. Kay and Girflet came too, and King Amauguin was there, and a great number of other knights were there with them. The discussion was in process when the Queen arrived and told them of the adventure which she had met in the forest, of the armed knight whom she saw, and of the malicious little dwarf who had struck her damsel on the bare hand with

his whip, and who struck Erec, too, in the same way an ugly blow on the face; but that Erec followed the knight to obtain vengeance, or increase his shame, and how he said that if possible he would be back by the third day. "Sire," says the Queen to the King, "listen to me a moment. If these knights approve what I say, postpone this kiss until the third day, when Erec will be back." There is none who does not agree with her, and the King himself approves her words.

(Vv. 342-392.) Erec steadily follows the knight who was armed and the dwarf who had struck him until they come to a well placed town, strong and fine 15. They enter straight through the gate. Within the town there was great joy of knights and ladies, of whom there were many and fair. Some were feeding in the streets their sparrow-hawks and moulting falcons; others were giving an airing to their tercels, 16 their mewed birds, and young yellow hawks; others play at dice or other game of chance, some at chess, and some at backgammon. The grooms in front of the stables are rubbing down and currying the horses. The ladies are bedecking themselves in their boudoirs. As soon as they see the knight coming, whom they recognised with his dwarf and damsel, they go out three by three to meet him. The knight they all greet and salute, but they give no heed to Erec, for they did not know him. Erec follows close upon the knight through the town, until he saw him lodged. Then, very joyful, he passed on a little farther until he saw reclining upon some steps a vavasor 17 well on in years. He was a comely man, with white locks, debonair, pleasing, and frank. There he was seated all alone, seeming to be engaged in thought. Erec took him for an honest man who would at once give him lodging. When he turned through the gate into the yard, the vavasor ran to meet him, and saluted him before Erec had said a word. "Fair sir," says he, "be welcome. If you will deign to lodge with me, here is my house all ready for you." Erec replies: "Thank you! For no other purpose have I come; I need a lodging place this night."

(Vv. 393-410.) Erec dismounts from his horse, which the host himself leads away by the bridle, and does great honour to his guest. The vavasor summons his wife and his beautiful daughter, who were busy in a work-room—doing I know not what. The lady came out with her daughter, who was dressed in a soft white under-robe with wide skirts hanging loose in folds. Over it she wore a white linen garment, which completed her attire. And this garment was so old that it was full of holes down the sides. Poor, indeed, was her garb without, but within her body was fair.

(Vv. 411-458.) The maid was charming, in sooth, for Nature had used all her skill in forming her. Nature herself had marvelled more than five hundred times how upon this one occasion she had succeeded in creating such a perfect thing. Never again could she so strive successfully to reproduce her pattern. Nature bears witness concerning her that never was so fair a creature seen in all the world. In truth I say that never did Iseut the Fair have such radiant golden tresses that she could be compared with this maiden. 18 The complexion of her forehead and face was clearer and more delicate than the lily. But with wondrous art her face with all its delicate pallor was suffused with a fresh crimson which Nature had bestowed upon her. Her eyes were so bright that they seemed like two stars. God never formed better nose, mouth, and eyes. What shall I say of her beauty? In sooth, she was made to be looked at; for in her one could have seen himself as in a mirror. So she came forth from the work-room: and when she saw the knight whom she had never seen before, she drew back a little, because she did not know

him, and in her modesty she blushed. Erec, for his part, was amazed when he beheld such beauty in her, and the vavasor said to her: "Fair daughter dear, take this horse and lead him to the stable along with my own horses. See that he lack for nothing: take off his saddle and bridle, give him oats and hay, look after him and curry him, that he may be in good condition."

(Vv. 459-546) The maiden takes the horse, unlaces his breast-strap, and takes off his bridle and saddle. Now the horse is in good hands, for she takes excellent care of him. She throws a halter over his head, rubs him down, curries him, and makes him comfortable. Then she ties him to the manger and puts plenty of fresh sweet hay and oats before him. Then she went back to her father, who said to her: "Fair daughter dear, take now this gentleman by the hand and show him all honour. Take him by the hand upstairs." The maiden did not delay (for in her there was no lack of courtesy) and led him by the hand upstairs. The lady had gone before and prepared the house. She had laid embroidered cushions and spreads upon the couches, where they all three sat down Erec with his host beside him, and the maiden opposite. Before them, the fire burns brightly. The vavasor had only one man-servant, and no maid for chamber or kitchen work. This one man was busy in the kitchen preparing meat and birds for supper. A skilful cook was he, who knew how to prepare meal in boiling water and birds on the spit. When he had the meal prepared in accordance with the orders which had been given him, he brought them water for washing in two basins. The table was soon set, cloths, bread, and wine set out, and they sat down to supper. They had their fill of all they needed. When they had finished and when the table was cleared, Erec thus addressed his host, the master of the house: "Tell me, fair host." he asked, "why your daughter, who is so passing fair and clever, is so poorly and unsuitably attired." "Fair friend," the vavasor replies, "many a man is harmed by poverty, and even so am I. I grieve to see her so poorly clad, and yet I cannot help it, for I have been so long involved in war that I have lost or mortgaged or sold all my land. 19 And yet she would be well enough dressed if I allowed her to accept everything that people wish to give her. The lord of this castle himself would have dressed her in becoming fashion and would have done her every manner of favour, for she is his niece and he is a count. And there is no nobleman in this region, however rich and powerful, who would not willingly have taken her to wife had I given my consent. But I am waiting yet for some better occasion, when God shall bestow still greater honour upon her, when fortune shall bring hither some king or count who shall lead her away, for there is under Heaven no king or count who would be ashamed of my daughter, who is so wondrous fair that her match cannot be found. Fair, indeed, she is; but yet greater far than her beauty, is her intelligence. God never created any one so discreet and of such open heart. When I have my daughter beside me, I don't care a marble about all the rest of the world. She is my delight and my pastime, she is my joy and comfort, my wealth and my treasure, and I love nothing so much as her own precious self."

(Vv. 547-690.) When Erec had listened to all that his host told him, he asked him to inform him whence came all the chivalry that was quartered in the town. For there was no street or house so poor and small but it was full of knights and ladies and squires. And the vavasor said to him: "Fair friend, these are the nobles of the country round; all, both young and old, have come to a fete which is to be held in this town tomorrow; therefore the houses are so full. When they shall all

have gathered, there will be a great stir to-morrow; for in the presence of all the people there will be set upon a silver perch a sparrow-hawk of five or six moultings—the best you can imagine. Whoever wishes to gain the hawk must have a mistress who is fair, prudent, and courteous. And if there be a knight so bold as to wish to defend the worth and the name of the fairest in his eyes, he will cause his mistress to step forward and lift the hawk from the perch, if no one dares to interpose. This is the custom they are observing, and for this each year they gather here." Thereupon Erec speaks and asks him: "Fair host, may it not displease you, but tell me, if you know, who is a certain knight bearing arms of azure and gold, who passed by here not long ago, having close beside him a courtly damsel, preceded by a hump-backed dwarf." To him the host then made reply: "That is he who will win the hawk without any opposition from the other knights. I don't believe that any one will offer opposition; this time there will be no blows or wounds. For two years already he has won it without being challenged; and if he wins it again this year, he will have gained permanent possession of it. Every succeeding year he may keep it without contest or challenge." Quickly Erec makes reply: "I do not like that knight. Upon my word, had I some arms I should challenge him for the hawk. Fair host, I beg you as a boon to advise me how I may be equipped with arms whether old or new, poor or rich, it matters not." And he replies to him generously: "It were a pity for you to feel concern on that score! I have good fine arms which I shall be glad to lend you. In the house I have a triple-woven hauberk, 110 which was selected from among five hundred. And I have some fine valuable greaves, polished, handsome, and light in weight. The helmet is bright and handsome, and the shield fresh and new. Horse, sword, and lance all I will lend you, of course; so let no more be said." "Thank you kindly, fair gentle host! But I wish for no better sword that this one which I have brought with me, nor for any other horse than my own, for I can get along well enough with him. If you will lend me the rest, I shall esteem it a great favour. But there is one more boon I wish to ask of you, for which I shall make just return if God grant that I come off from the battle with honour." And frankly he replies to him: "Ask confidently for what you want, whatever it be, for nothing of mine shall lack you." Then Erec said that he wished to defend the hawk on behalf of his daughter; for surely there will be no damsel who is one hundredth part as beautiful as she. And if he takes her with him, he will have good and just reason to maintain and to prove that she is entitled to carry away the hawk. Then he added: "Sire, you know not what guest you have sheltered here, nor do you know my estate and kin. I am the son of a rich and puissant king: my father's name is King Lac, and the Bretons call me Erec. I belong to King Arthur's court, and have been with him now three years. I know not if any report of my father or of me has ever reached this land. But I promise you and vow that if you will fit me out with arms, and will give me your daughter to-morrow when I strive for the hawk, I will take her to my country, if God grant me the victory, and I will give her a crown to wear, and she shall be queen of three cities." "Ah, fair sir! Is it true that you are Erec, the son of Lac?" "That is who I am, indeed" quoth he. Then the host was greatly delighted and said: "We have indeed heard of you in this country. Now I think all the more of you, for you are very valiant and brave. Nothing now shall you be refused by me. At your request I give you my fair daughter." Then taking her by the hand, he says: "Here, I give her to you." Erec received her joyfully, and now has all he desired. Now they are all happy there: the father is greatly delighted, and the mother weeps for joy.

The maiden sat quiet; but she was very happy and glad that she was betrothed to him, because he was valiant and courteous: and she knew that he would some day be king, and she should receive honour and be crowned rich queen.

(Vv. 691-746.) They had sat up very late that night. But now the beds were prepared with white sheets and soft pillows, and when the conversation flagged they all went to bed in happy frame. Erec slept little that night, and the next morn, at crack of dawn, he and his host rose early. They both go to pray at church, and hear a hermit chant the Mass of the Holy Spirit, not forgetting to make an offering. When they had heard Mass both kneel before the altar and then return to the house. Erec was eager for the battle; so he asks for arms, and they are given to him. The maiden herself puts on his arms (though she casts no spell or charm), 111 laces on his iron greaves, and makes them fast with thong of deer-hide. She puts on his hauberk with its strong meshes, and laces on his ventail. The gleaming helmet she sets upon his head, and thus arms him well from tip to toe. At his side she fastens his sword, and then orders his horse to be brought, which is done. Up he jumped clear of the ground. The damsel then brings the shield and the strong lance: she hands him the shield, and he takes it and hangs it about his neck by the strap. She places the lance in his hand, and when he had grasped it by the butt-end, he thus addressed the gentle vavasor: "Fair sire," quoth he, "if you please, make your daughter ready now; for I wish to escort her to the sparrow-hawk in accordance with our agreement." The vavasor then without delay had saddled a bay palfrey. There can nothing be said of the harness because of the dire poverty with which the vavasor was afflicted. Saddle and bridle were put on, and up the maiden mounted all free and in light attire, without waiting to be urged. Erec wished to delay no longer; so off he starts with the host's daughter by his side, followed by the gentleman and his lady.

(Vv. 747-862.) Erec rides with lance erect and with the comely damsel by his side. All the people, great and small, gaze at them with wondering eyes as they pass through the streets. And thus they question each other: "Who is yonder knight? He must be doughty and brave, indeed, to act as escort for this fair maid. His efforts will be well employed in proving that this damsel is the fairest of them all." One man to another says: "In very truth, she ought to have the sparrow-hawk." Some praised the maid, while many said: "God! who can this knight be, with the fair damsel by his side?" "I know not." "Nor I." Thus spake each one. "But his gleaming helmet becomes him well, and the hauberk, and shield, and his sharp steel sword. He sits well upon his steed and has the bearing of a valiant vassal, well-shapen in arm, in limb and foot." While all thus stand and gaze at them, they for their part made no delay to take their stand by the sparrow-hawk, where to one side they awaited the knight. And now behold! they see him come, attended by his dwarf and his damsel. He had heard the report, that a knight had come who wished to obtain the sparrow-hawk, but he did not believe there could be in the world a knight so bold as to dare to fight with him. He would quickly defeat him and lay him low. All the people knew him well, and all welcome him and escort him in a noisy crowd: knights, squires, ladies, and damsels make haste to run after him. Leading them all the knight rides proudly on, with his damsel and his dwarf at his side, and he makes his way quickly to the sparrow-hawk. But all about there was such a press of the rough and vulgar crowd that it was impossible to touch the hawk or to come near where it was. Then the Count arrived on the scene, and threatened the populace with a switch which he held in

his hand. The crowd drew back, and the knight advanced and said quietly to his lady: "My lady, this bird, which is so perfectly moulted and so fair, should be yours as your just portion; for you are wondrous fair and full of charm. Yours it shall surely be so long as I live. Step forward, my dear, and lift the hawk from the perch." The damsel was on the point of stretching forth her hand when Erec hastened to challenge her, little heeding the other's arrogance. "Damsel," he cries, "stand back! Go dally with some other bird, for to this one you have no right. In spite of all, I say this hawk shall never be yours. For a better one than you claims it—aye, much more fair and more courteous." The other knight is very wroth; but Erec does not mind him, and bids his own maiden step forward. "Fair one." he cries, "come forth. Lift the bird from the perch, for it is right that you should have it. Damsel, come forth! For I will make boast to defend it if any one is so bold as to intervene. For no woman excels you in beauty or worth, in grace or honour any more than the moon outshines the sun." The other could suffer it no longer, when he hears him so manfully offer himself to do battle. "Vassal," he cries, "who art thou who dost thus dispute with me the hawk?" Erec boldly answers him: "A knight I am from another land. This hawk I have come to obtain; for it is right, I say it in spite of all, that this damsel of mine should have it." "Away!" cries the other, "it shall never be. Madness has brought thee here. If thou dost wish to have the hawk, thou shalt pay fight dearly for it." "Pay, vassal; and how?" "Thou must fight with me, if thou dost not resign it to me." "You talk madness," cries Erec; "for me these are idle threats; for little enough do I fear you." "Then I defy thee here and now. The battle is inevitable." Erec replies: "God help me now; for never did I wish for aught so much." Now soon you will hear the noise of battle.

(Vv. 863-1080.) The large place was cleared, with the people gathered all around. They draw off from each other the space of an acre, then drive their horses together; they reach for each other with the tips of their lances, and strike each other so hard that the shields are pierced and broken; the lances split and crack; the saddle-bows are knocked to bits behind. They must needs lose their stirrups, so that they both fall to the ground, and the horses run off across the field. Though smitten with the lances, they are quickly on their feet again, and draw their swords from the scabbards. With great fierceness they attack each other, and exchange great sword blows, so that the helmets are crushed and made to ring. Fierce is the clash of the swords, as they rain great blows upon neck and shoulders. For this is no mere sport: they break whatever they touch, cutting the shields and shattering the hauberks. The swords are red with crimson blood. Long the battle lasts; but they fight so lustily that they become weary and listless. Both the damsels are in tears, and each knight sees his lady weep and raise her hands to God and pray that He may give the honours of the battle to the one who strives for her. "Ha! vassal," quoth the knight to Erec, "let us withdraw and rest a little; for too weak are these blows we deal. We must deal better blows than these; for now it draws near evening. It is shameful and highly discreditable that this battle should last so long. See yonder that gentle maid who weeps for thee and calls on God. Full sweetly she prays for thee, as does also mine for me. Surely we should do our best with our blades of steel for the sake of our lady-loves." Erec replies: "You have spoken well." Then they take a little rest, Erec looking toward his lady as she softly prays for him. While he sat and looked on her, great strength was recruited within him. Her love and beauty inspired him with great boldness. He remembered the Queen, to whom he pledged his word that he would avenge the

insult done him, or would make it greater yet. "Ah! wretch," says he, "why do I wait? I have not yet taken vengeance for the injury which this vassal permitted when his dwarf struck me in the wood." His anger is revived within him as he summons the knight: "Vassal," quoth he, "I call you to battle anew. Too long we have rested; let us now renew our strife." And he replies: "That is no hardship to me." Whereupon, they again fall upon each other. They were both expert fencers. At his first lunge the knight would have wounded Erec had he not skilfully parried. Even so, he smote him so hard over the shield beside his temple that he struck a piece from his helmet. Closely shaving his white coif, the sword descends, cleaving the shield through to the buckle, and cutting more than a span from the side of his hauberk. Then he must have been well stunned, as the cold steel penetrated to the flesh on his thigh. May God protect him now! If the blow had not glanced off, it would have cut right through his body. But Erec is in no wise dismayed: he pays him back what is owing him, and. attacking him boldly, smites him upon the shoulder so violently a blow that the shield cannot withstand it, nor is the hauberk of any use to prevent the sword from penetrating to the bone. He made the crimson blood flow down to his waist-band. Both of the vassals are hard fighters: they fight with honours even, for one cannot gain from the other a single foot of ground. Their hauberks are so torn and their shields so hacked, that there is actually not enough of them left to serve as a protection. So they fight all exposed. Each one loses a deal of blood, and both grow weak. He strikes Erec and Erec strikes him. Erec deals him such a tremendous blow upon the helmet that he quite stuns him. Then he lets him have it again and again, giving him three blows in quick succession, which entirely split the helmet and cut the coif beneath it. The sword even reaches the skull and cuts a bone of his head, but without penetrating the brain. He stumbles and totters, and while he staggers, Erec pushes him over, so that he falls upon his right side. Erec grabs him by the helmet and forcibly drags it from his head, and unlaces the ventail, so that his head and face are completely exposed. When Erec thinks of the insult done him by the dwarf in the wood, he would have cut off his head, had he not cried for mercy. "Ah! vassal," says he, "thou hast defeated me. Mercy now, and do not kill me, after having overcome me and taken me prisoner: that would never bring thee praise or glory. If thou shouldst touch me more, thou wouldst do great villainy. Take here my sword; I yield it thee." Erec, however, does not take it, but says in reply: "I am within an ace of killing thee." "Ah! gentle knight, mercy! For what crime, indeed, or for what wrong shouldst thou hate me with mortal hatred? I never saw thee before that I am aware, and never have I been engaged in doing thee any shame or wrong." Erec replies: "Indeed you have." "Ah, sire, tell me when! For I never saw you, that I can remember, and if I have done you any wrong, I place myself at your mercy." Then Erec said: "Vassal, I am he who was in the forest yesterday with Queen Guinevere, when thou didst allow thy ill-bred dwarf to strike my lady's damsel. It is disgraceful to strike a woman. And afterwards he struck me, taking me for some common fellow. Thou wast guilty of too great insolence when thou sawest such an outrage and didst complacently permit such a monster of a lout to strike the damsel and myself. For such a crime I may well hate thee; for thou hast committed a grave offence. Thou shalt now constitute thyself my prisoner, and without delay go straight to my lady whom thou wilt surely find at Cardigan, if thither thou takest thy way. Thou wilt reach there this very night, for it is not seven leagues from here, I think. Thou shalt hand over to her thyself, thy damsel,

and thy dwarf, to do as she may dictate; and tell her that I send her word that to-morrow I shall come contented, bringing with me a damsel so fair and wise and fine that in all the world she has not her match. So much thou mayst tell her truthfully. And now I wish to know thy name." Then he must needs say in spite of himself: "Sire, my name is Yder, son of Nut. This morning I had not thought that any single man by force of arms could conquer me. Now I have found by experience a man who is better than I. You are a very valiant knight, and I pledge you my faith here and now that I will go without delay and put myself in the Queen's hands. But tell me without reserve what your name may be. Who shall I say it is that sends me? For I am ready to start." And he replies: "My name I will tell thee without disguise: it is Erec. Go, and tell her that it is I who have sent thee to her." "Now I'll go, and I promise you that I will put my dwarf, my damsel, and myself altogether at her disposal (you need have no fear), and I will give her news of you and of your damsel." Then Erec received his plighted word, and the Count and all the people round about the ladies and the gentlemen were present at the agreement. Some were joyous, and some downcast; some were sorry, and others glad. The most rejoiced for the sake of the damsel with the white raiment, the daughter of the poor vavasor she of the gentle and open heart; but his damsel and those who were devoted to him were sorry for Yder.

(Vv. 1081-1170.) Yder, compelled to execute his promise, did not wish to tarry longer, but mounted his steed at once. But why should I make a long story? Taking his dwarf and his damsel, they traversed the woods and the plain, going on straight until they came to Cardigan. In the bower [112] outside the great hall, Gawain and Kay the seneschal and a great number of other lords were gathered. The seneschal was the first to espy those approaching, and said to my lord Gawain: "Sire, my heart divines that the vassal who yonder comes is he of whom the Queen spoke as having yesterday done her such an insult. If I am not mistaken, there are three in the party, for I see the dwarf and the damsel." "That is so," says my lord Gawain; "it is surely a damsel and a dwarf who are coming straight toward us with the knight. The knight himself is fully armed, but his shield is not whole. If the Queen should see him, she would know him. Hello, seneschal, go call her now!" So he went straightway and found her in one of the apartments. "My lady," says he, "do you remember the dwarf who yesterday angered you by wounding your damsel?" "Yes, I remember him right well. Seneschal, have you any news of him? Why have you mentioned him?" "Lady, because I have seen a knight-errant armed coming upon a grey horse, and if my eyes have not deceived me, I saw a damsel with him; and it seems to me that with him comes the dwarf, who still holds the scourge from which Erec received his lashing." Then the Queen rose quickly and said: "Let us go quickly, seneschal, to see if it is the vassal. If it is he, you may be sure that I shall tell you so, as soon as I see him." And Kay said: "I will show him to you. Come up into the bower where your knights are assembled. It was from there we saw him coming, and my lord Gawain himself awaits you there. My lady, let us hasten thither, for here we have too long delayed." Then the Queen bestirred herself, and coming to the windows she took her stand by my lord Gawain, and straightway recognised the knight. "Ha! my lords," she cries, "it is he. He has been through great danger. He has been in a battle. I do not know whether Erec has avenged his grief, or whether this knight has defeated Erec. But there is many a dent upon his shield, and his hauberk is covered with blood, so that it is rather red than white." "In sooth, my

lady," quoth my lord Gawain, "I am very sure that you are quite right. His hauberk is covered with blood, and pounded and beaten, showing plainly that he has been in a fight. We can easily see that the battle has been hot. Now we shall soon hear from him news that will give us joy or gloom: whether Erec sends him to you here as a prisoner at your discretion, or whether he comes in pride of heart to boast before us arrogantly that he has defeated or killed Erec. No other news can he bring, I think." The Queen says: "I am of the same opinion." And all the others say: "It may well be so."

(Vv. 1171-1243.) Meanwhile Yder enters the castle gate, bringing them news. They all came down from the bower, and went to meet him. Yder came up to the royal terrace and there dismounted from his horse. And Gawain took the damsel and helped her down from her palfrey; the dwarf, for his part, dismounted too. There were more than one hundred knights standing there, and when the three newcomers had all dismounted they were led into the King's presence. As soon as Yder saw the Queen, he bowed low and first saluted her, then the King and his knights, and said: "Lady, I am sent here as your prisoner by a gentleman, a valiant and noble knight, whose face yesterday my dwarf made smart with his knotted scourge. He has overcome me at arms and defeated me. Lady, the dwarf I bring you here: he has come to surrender to you at discretion. I bring you myself, my damsel, and my dwarf to do with us as you please." The Queen keeps her peace no longer, but asks him for news of Erec: "Tell me," she says, "if you please, do you know when Erec will arrive?" "To-morrow, lady, and with him a damsel he will bring, the fairest of all I ever knew." When he had delivered his message, the Queen, who was kind and sensible, said to him courteously: "Friend, since thou hast thrown thyself upon my mercy, thy confinement shall be less harsh; for I have no desire to seek thy harm. But tell me now, so help thee God, what is thy name?" And he replies: "Lady, my name is Yder, son of Nut." And they knew that he told the truth. Then the Queen arose, and going before the King, said: "Sire, did you hear? You have done well to wait for Erec, the valiant knight. I gave you good advice yesterday, when I counselled you to await his return. This proves that it is wise to take advice." The King replies: "That is no lie; rather is it perfectly true that he who takes advice is no fool. Happily we followed your advice yesterday. But if you care anything for me, release this knight from his durance, provided he consent to join henceforth my household and court; and if he does not consent, let him suffer the consequence." When the King had thus spoken, the Queen straightway released the knight; but it was on this condition, that he should remain in the future at the court. He did not have to be urged before he gave his consent to stay. Now he was of the court and household to which he had not before belonged. Then valets were at hand to run and relieve him of his arms.

(Vv. 1244-1319.) Now we must revert to Erec, whom we left in the field where the battle had taken place. Even Tristan, when he slew fierce Morhot on Saint Samson's isle [113], awakened no such jubilee as they celebrated here over Erec. Great and small, thin and stout—all make much of him and praise his knighthood. There is not a knight but cries: "Lord what a vassal! Under Heaven there is not his like!" They follow him to his lodgings, praising him and talking much. Even the Count himself embraces him, who above the rest was glad, and said: "Sire, if you please, you ought by right to lodge in my house, since you are the son of King Lac. If you would accept of my hospitality you would do me a great honour, for I regard you as my liege. Fair sire, may it please you, I beg you to

lodge with me." Erec answers: "May it not displease you, but I shall not desert my host to-night, who has done me much honour in giving me his daughter. What say you, sir? Is it not a fair and precious gift?" "Yes, sire," the Count replies; "the gift, in truth, is fine and good. The maid herself is fair and clever, and besides is of very noble birth. You must know that her mother is my sister. Surely, I am glad at heart that you should deign to take my niece. Once more I beg you to lodge with me this night." Erec replies: "Ask me no more. I will not do it." Then the Count saw that further insistence was useless, and said: "Sire, as it please you! We may as well say no more about it; but I and my knights will all be with you to-night to cheer you and bear you company." When Erec heard that, he thanked him, and returned to his host's dwelling, with the Count attending him. Ladies and knights were gathered there, and the vavasor was glad at heart. As soon as Erec arrived, more than a score of squires ran quickly to remove his arms. Any one who was present in that house could have witnessed a happy scene. Erec went first and took his seat; then all the others in order sit down upon the couches, the cushions, and benches. At Erec's side the Count sat down, and the damsel with her radiant face, who was feeding the much disputed hawk upon her wrist with a plover's wing. 114 Great honour and joy and prestige had she gained that day, and she was very glad at heart both for the bird and for her lord. She could not have been happier, and showed it plainly, making no secret of her joy. All could see how gay she was, and throughout the house there was great rejoicing for the happiness of the maid they loved.

(Vv. 1320-1352.) Erec thus addressed the vavasor: "Fair host, fair friend, fair sire! You have done me great honour, and richly shall it be repaid you. To-morrow I shall take away your daughter with me to the King's court, where I wish to take her as my wife; and if you will tarry here a little, I shall send betimes to fetch you. I shall have you escorted into the country which is my father's now, but which later will be mine. It is far from here—by no means near. There I shall give you two towns, very splendid, rich, and fine. You shall be lord of Roadan, which was built in the time of Adam, and of another town close by, which is no less valuable. The people call it Montrevel, and my father owns no better town. 115 And before the third day has passed, I shall send you plenty of gold and silver, of dappled and grey furs, and precious silken stuffs wherewith to adorn yourself and your wife my dear lady. To-morrow at dawn I wish to take your daughter to court, dressed and arrayed as she is at present. I wish my lady, the Queen, to dress her in her best dress of satin and scarlet cloth."

(Vv. 1353-1478.) There was a maiden near at hand, very honourable, prudent, and virtuous. She was seated on a bench beside the maid with the white shift, and was her own cousin the niece of my lord the Count. When she heard how Erec intended to take her cousin in such very poor array to the Queen's court, she spoke about it to the Count. "Sire," she says, "it would be a shame to you more than to any one else if this knight should take your niece away with him in such sad array." And the Count made answer: "Gentle niece, do you give her the best of your dresses." But Erec heard the conversation, and said: "By no means, my lord. For be assured that nothing in the world would tempt me to let her have another robe until the Queen shall herself bestow it upon her." When the damsel heard this, she replied: "Alas! fair sire, since you insist upon leading off my cousin thus dressed in a white shift and chemise, and since you are determined that she shall have none of my dresses, a different gift I wish to make her. I have three good

palfreys, as good as any of king or count, one sorrel, one dappled, and the other black with white forefeet. Upon my word, if you had a hundred to pick from, you would not find a better one than the dappled mount. The birds in the air do not fly more swiftly than the palfrey; and he is not too lively, but just suits a lady. A child can ride him, for he is neither skittish nor balky, nor does he bite nor kick nor become unmanageable. Any one who is looking for something better does not know what he wants. And his pace is so easy and gentle that a body is more comfortable and easy on his back than in a boat." Then said Erec: "My dear, I have no objection to her accepting this gift; indeed, I am pleased with the offer, and do not wish her to refuse it." Then the damsel calls one of her trusty servants, and says to him: "Go, friend, saddle my dappled palfrey, and lead him here at once." And he carries out her command: he puts on saddle and bridle and strives to make him appear well. Then he jumps on the maned palfrey, which is now ready for inspection. When Erec saw the animal, he did not spare his praise, for he could see that he was very fine and gentle. So he bade a servant lead him back and hitch him in the stable beside his own horse. Then they all separated, after an evening agreeably spent. The Count goes off to his own dwelling, and leaves Erec with the vavasor, saying that he will bear him company in the morning when he leaves. All that night they slept well. In the morning, when the dawn was bright, Erec prepares to start, commanding his horses to be saddled. His fair sweetheart, too, awakes, dresses, and makes ready. The vavasor and his wife rise too, and every knight and lady there prepares to escort the damsel and the knight. Now they are all on horseback, and the Count as well. Erec rides beside the Count, having beside him his sweetheart ever mindful of her hawk. Having no other riches, she plays with her hawk. Very merry were they as they rode along; but when the time came to part, the Count wished to send along with Erec a party of his knights to do him honour by escorting him. But he announced that none should bide with him, and that he wanted no company but that of the damsel. Then, when they had accompanied them some distance, he said: "In God's name, farewell!" Then the Count kisses Erec and his niece, and commends them both to merciful God. Her father and mother, too, kiss them again and again, and could not keep back their tears: at parting, the mother weeps, the father and the daughter too. For such is love and human nature, and such is affection between parents and children. They wept from sorrow, tenderness, and love which they had for their child; yet they knew full well that their daughter was to fill a place from which great honour would accrue to them. They shed tears of love and pity when they separated from their daughter, but they had no other cause to weep. They knew well enough that eventually they would receive great honour from her marriage. So at parting many a tear was shed, as weeping they commend one another to God, and thus separate without more delay.

(Vv. 1479-1690.) Erec quit his host; for he was very anxious to reach the royal court. In his adventure he took great satisfaction; for now he had a lady passing fair, discreet, courteous, and debonair. He could not look at her enough: for the more he looks at her, the more she pleases him. He cannot help giving her a kiss. He is happy to ride by her side, and it does him good to look at her. Long he gazes at her fair hair, her laughing eyes, and her radiant forehead, her nose, her face, and mouth, for all of which gladness fills his heart. He gazes upon her down to the waist, at her chin and her snowy neck, her bosom and sides, her arms and hands. But no less the damsel looks at the vassal with a clear eye and loyal heart, as if

they were in competition. They would not have ceased to survey each other even for promise of a reward! A perfect match they were in courtesy, beauty, and gentleness. And they were so alike in quality, manner, and customs, that no one wishing to tell the truth could choose the better of them, nor the fairer, nor the more discreet. Their sentiments, too, were much alike; so that they were well suited to each other. Thus each steals the other's heart away. Law or marriage never brought together two such sweet creatures. And so they rode along until just on the stroke of noon they approached the castle of Cardigan, where they were both expected. Some of the first nobles of the court had gone up to look from the upper windows and see if they could see them. Queen Guinevere ran up, and even the King came with Kay and Perceval of Wales, and with them my lord Gawain and Tor, the son of King Ares; Lucan the cupbearer was there, too, and many another doughty knight. Finally, they espied Erec coming along in company with his lady. They all knew him well enough from as far as they could see him. The Queen is greatly pleased, and indeed the whole court is glad of his coming, because they all love him so. As soon as he was come before the entrance hall, the King and Queen go down to meet him, all greeting him in God's name. They welcome Erec and his maiden, commending and praising her great beauty. And the King himself caught her and lifted her down from her palfrey. The King was decked in fine array and was then in cheery mood. He did signal honour to the damsel by taking her hand and leading her up into the great stone hall. After them Erec and the Queen also went up hand in hand, and he said to her: "I bring you, lady, my damsel and my sweetheart dressed in poor garb. As she was given to me, so have I brought her to you. She is the daughter of a poor vavasor. Through poverty many an honourable man is brought low: her father, for instance, is gentle and courteous, but he has little means. And her mother is a very gentle lady, the sister of a rich Count. She has no lack of beauty or of lineage, that I should not marry her. It is poverty that has compelled her to wear this white linen garment until both sleeves are torn at the side. And yet, had it been my desire, she might have had dresses rich enough. For another damsel, a cousin of hers, wished to give her a robe of ermine and of spotted or grey silk. But I would not have her dressed in any other robe until you should have seen her. Gentle lady, consider the matter now and see what need she has of a fine becoming gown." And the Queen at once replies: "You have done quite right; it is fitting that she should have one of my gowns, and I will give her straightway a rich, fair gown, both fresh and new." The Queen then hastily took her off to her own private room, and gave orders to bring quickly the fresh tunic and the greenish-purple mantle, embroidered with little crosses, which had been made for herself. The one who went at her behest came bringing to her the mantle and the tunic, which was lined with white ermine even to the sleeves. At the wrists and on the neck-band there was in truth more than half a mark's weight of beaten gold, and everywhere set in the gold there were precious stones of divers colours, indigo and green, blue and dark brown. This tunic was very rich, but not a writ less precious, I trow, was the mantle. As yet, there were no ribbons on it; for the mantle like the tunic was brand new. The mantle was very rich and fine: laid about the neck were two sable skins, and in the tassels there was more than an ounce of gold; on one a hyacinth, and on the other a ruby flashed more bright than burning candle. The fur lining was of white ermine; never was finer seen or found. The cloth was skilfully embroidered with little crosses, all different, indigo, vermilion, dark blue, white,

green, blue, and yellow. The Queen called for some ribbons four ells long, made of silken thread and gold. The ribbons are given to her, handsome and well matched. Quickly she had them fastened to the mantle by some one who knew how to do it, and who was master of the art. When the mantle needed no more touches, the gay and gentle lady clasped the maid with the white gown and said to her cheerily: "Mademoiselle, you must change this frock for this tunic which is worth more than a hundred marks of silver. So much I wish to bestow upon you. And put on this mantle, too. Another time I will give you more." Not able to refuse the gift, she takes the robe and thanks her for it. Then two maids took her aside into a room, where she took off her frock as being of no further value; but she asked and requested that it be given away (to some poor woman) for the love of God. Then she dons the tunic, and girds herself, binding on tightly a golden belt, and afterwards puts on the mantle. Now she looked by no means ill; for the dress became her so well that it made her look more beautiful than ever. The two maids wove a gold thread in amongst her golden hair: but her tresses were more radiant than the thread of gold, fine though it was. The maids, moreover, wove a fillet of flowers of many various colours and placed it upon her head. They strove as best they might to adorn her in such wise that no fault should be found with her attire. Strung upon a ribbon around her neck, a damsel hung two brooches of enamelled gold. Now she looked so charming and fair that I do not believe that you could find her equal in any land, search as you might, so skilfully had Nature wrought in her. Then she stepped out of the dressing-room into the Queen's presence. The Queen made much of her, because she liked her and was glad that she was beautiful and had such gentle manners. They took each other by the hand and passed into the King's presence. And when the King saw them, he got up to meet them. When they came into the great hall, there were so many knights there who rose before them that I cannot call by name the tenth part of them, or the thirteenth, or the fifteenth. But I can tell you the names of some of the best of the knights who belonged to the Round Table and who were the best in the world.

(Vv. 1691-1750.) Before all the excellent knights, Gawain ought to be named the first, and second Erec the son of Lac, and third Lancelot of the Lake. [116] Gornemant of Gohort was fourth, and the fifth was the Handsome Coward. The sixth was the Ugly Brave, the seventh Meliant of Liz, the eighth Mauduit the Wise, and the ninth Dodinel the Wild. Let Gandelu be named the tenth, for he was a goodly man. The others I shall mention without order, because the numbers bother me. Eslit was there with Briien, and Yvain the son of Uriien. And Yvain of Loenel was there, as well as Yvain the Adulterer. Beside Yvain of Cavaliot was Garravain of Estrangot. After the Knight with the Horn was the Youth with the Golden Ring. And Tristan who never laughed sat beside Bliobleheris, and beside Brun of Piciez was his brother Gru the Sullen. The Armourer sat next, who preferred war to peace. Next sat Karadues the Shortarmed, a knight of good cheer; and Caveron of Robendic, and the son of King Quenedic and the Youth of Quintareus and Yder of the Dolorous Mount. Gaheriet and Kay of Estraus, Amauguin and Gales the Bald, Grain, Gornevain, and Carabes, and Tor the son of King Aras, Girflet the son of Do, and Taulas, who never wearied of arms: and a young man of great merit, Loholt the son of King Arthur, [117] and Sagremor the Impetuous, who should not be forgotten, nor Bedoiier the Master of the Horse, who was skilled at chess and trictrac, nor Bravain, nor King Lot, nor Galegantin of Wales, nor Gronosis, versed in evil, who was son of Kay the Seneschal, nor

Labigodes the Courteous, nor Count Cadorcaniois, nor Letron of Prepelesant, whose manners were so excellent, nor Breon the son of Canodan, nor the Count of Honolan who had such a head of fine fair hair; he it was who received the King's horn in an evil day; 118 he never had any care for truth.

(Vv. 1751-1844.) When the stranger maiden saw all the knights arrayed looking steadfastly at her, she bowed her head in embarrassment; nor was it strange that her face blushed all crimson. But her confusion was so becoming to her that she looked all the more lovely. When the King saw that she was embarrassed, he did not wish to leave her side. Taking her gently by the hand, he made her sit down on his right hand; and on his left sat the Queen, speaking thus to the King the while. "Sire, in my opinion he who can win such a fair lady by his arms in another land ought by right to come to a royal court. It was well we waited for Erec; for now you can bestow the kiss upon the fairest of the court. I should think none would find fault with you! for none can say, unless he lie, that this maiden is not the most charming of all the damsels here, or indeed in all the world." The King makes answer: "That is no lie; and upon her, if there is no remonstrance, I shall bestow the honour of the White Stag." Then he added to the knights: "My lords, what say you? What is your opinion? In body, in face, and in whatever a maid should have, this one is the most charming and beautiful to be found, as I may say, before you come to where Heaven and earth meet. I say it is meet that she should receive the honour of the Stag. And you, my lords, what do you think about it? Can you make any objection? If any one wishes to protest, let him straightway speak his mind. I am King, and must keep my word and must not permit any baseness, falsity, or arrogance. I must maintain truth and righteousness. It is the business of a loyal king to support the law, truth, faith, and justice. I would not in any wise commit a disloyal deed or wrong to either weak or strong. It is not meet that any one should complain of me; nor do I wish the custom and the practice to lapse, which my family has been wont to foster. You, too, would doubtless regret to see me strive to introduce other customs and other laws than those my royal sire observed. Regardless of consequences, I am bound to keep and maintain the institution of my father Pendragon, who was a just king and emperor. Now tell me fully what you think! Let none be slow to speak his mind, if this damsel is not the fairest of my household and ought not by right to receive the kiss of the White Stag: I wish to know what you truly think." Then they all cry with one accord: "Sire, by the Lord and his Cross! you may well kiss her with good reason, for she is the fairest one there is. In this damsel there is more beauty than there is of radiance in the sun. You may kiss her freely, for we all agree in sanctioning it." When the King hears that this is well pleasing to them all, he will no longer delay in bestowing the kiss, but turns toward her and embraces her. The maid was sensible, and perfectly willing that the King should kiss her; she would have been discourteous, indeed, to resent it. In courteous fashion and in the presence of all his knights the King kissed her, and said: "My dear. I give you my love in all honesty. I will love you with true heart, without malice and without guile." By this adventure the King carried out the practice and the usage to which the White Stag was entitled at his court.

Here ends the first part of my story. 119

(Vv. 1845-1914.) When the kiss of the Stag was taken according to the custom of the country, Erec, like a polite and kind man, was solicitous for his poor host. It was not his intention to fail to execute what he had promised. Hear how he kept

his covenant: for he sent him now five sumpter mules, strong and sleek, loaded with dresses and clothes, buckrams and scarlets, marks of gold and silver plate, furs both vair and grey, skins of sable, purple stuffs, and silks. When the mules were loaded with all that a gentleman can need, he sent with them an escort of ten knights and sergeants chosen from his own men, and straightly charged them to salute his host and show great honour both to him and to his lady, as if it were to himself in person; and when they should have presented to them the sumpters which they brought them, the gold, the silver, and money, and all the other furnishings which were in the boxes, they should escort the lady and the vavasor with great honour into his kingdom of Farther Wales. 120 Two towns there he had promised them, the most choice and the best situated that there were in all his land, with nothing to fear from attack. Montrevel was the name of one, and the other's name was Roadan. When they should arrive in his kingdom, they should make over to them these two towns, together with their rents and their jurisdiction, in accordance with what he had promised them. All was carried out as Erec had ordered. The messengers made no delay, and in good time they presented to his host the gold and the silver and the sumpters and the robes and the money, of which there was great plenty. They escorted them into Erec's kingdom, and strove to serve them well. They came into the country on the third day, and transferred to them the towers of the towns; for King Lac made no objection. He gave them a warm welcome and showed them honour, loving them for the sake of his son Erec. He made over to them the title to the towns, and established their suzerainty by making knights and bourgeois swear that they would reverence them as their true liege lords. When this was done and accomplished, the messengers returned to their lord Erec, who received them gladly. When he asked for news of the vavasor and his lady, of his own father and of his kingdom, the report they gave him was good and fair.

(Vv. 1915-2024.) Not long after this, the time drew near when Erec was to celebrate his marriage. The delay was irksome to him, and he resolved no longer to suffer and wait. So he went and asked of the King that it might please him to allow him to be married at the court. The King vouchsafed him the boon, and sent through all his kingdom to search for the kings and counts who were his liege-men, bidding them that none be so bold as not to be present at Pentecost. None dares to hold back and not go to court at the King's summons. Now I will tell you, and listen well, who were these counts and kings. With a rich escort and one hundred extra mounts Count Brandes of Gloucester came. After him came Menagormon, who was Count of Clivelon. And he of the Haute Montagne came with a very rich following. The Count of Treverain came, too, with a hundred of his knights, and Count Godegrain with as many more. Along with those whom I have just mentioned came Maheloas, a great baron, lord of the Isle of Voirre. In this island no thunder is heard, no lightning strikes, nor tempests rage, nor do toads or serpents exist there, nor is it ever too hot or too cold. 121 Graislemier of Fine Posterne brought twenty companions, and had with him his brother Guigomar, lord of the Isle of Avalon. Of the latter we have heard it said that he was a friend of Morgan the Fay, and such he was in very truth. Davit of Tintagel came, who never suffered woe or grief. Guergesin, the Duke of Haut Bois, came with a very rich equipment. There was no lack of counts and dukes, but of kings there were still more. Garras of Cork, a doughty king, was there with five hundred knights clad in mantles, hose, and tunics of brocade and silk. Upon a Cappadocian steed came

Aguisel, the Scottish king, and brought with him his two sons, Cadret and Coi—two much respected knights. Along with those whom I have named came King Ban of Gomeret, and he had in his company only young men, beardless as yet on chin and lip. A numerous and gay band he brought two hundred of them in his suite; and there was none, whoever he be, but had a falcon or tercel, a merlin or a sparrow-hawk, or some precious pigeon-hawk, golden or mewed. Kerrin, the old King of Riel, brought no youth, but rather three hundred companions of whom the youngest was seven score years old. Because of their great age, their heads were all as white as snow, and their beards reached down to their girdles. Arthur held them in great respect. The lord of the dwarfs came next, Bilis, the king of Antipodes. This king of whom I speak was a dwarf himself and own brother of Brien. Bilis, on the one hand, was the smallest of all the dwarfs, while his brother Brien was a half-foot or full palm taller than any other knight in the kingdom. To display his wealth and power, Bilis brought with him two kings who were also dwarfs and who were vassals of his, Grigoras and Glecidalan. Every one looked at them as marvels. When they had arrived at court, they were treated with great esteem. All three were honoured and served at the court like kings, for they were very perfect gentlemen. In brief, when King Arthur saw all his lords assembled, his heart was glad. Then, to heighten the joy, he ordered a hundred squires to be bathed whom he wished to dub knights. There was none of them but had a parti-coloured robe of rich brocade of Alexandria, each one choosing such as pleased his fancy. All had arms of a uniform pattern, and horses swift and full of mettle, of which the worst was worth a hundred livres.

(Vv. 2025-2068.) When Erec received his wife, he must needs call her by her right name. For a wife is not espoused unless she is called by her proper name. As yet no one knew her name, but now for the first time it was made known: Enide was her baptismal name. 122 The Archbishop of Canterbury, who had come to the court, blessed them, as is his right. When the court was all assembled, there was not a minstrel in the countryside who possessed any pleasing accomplishment that did not come to the court. In the great hall there was much merry-making, each one contributing what he could to the entertainment: one jumps, another tumbles, another does magic; there is story-telling, singing, whistling, playing from notes; they play on the harp, the rote, the fiddle, the violin, the flute, and pipe. The maidens sing and dance, and outdo each other in the merry-making. At the wedding that day everything was done which can give joy and incline man's heart to gladness. Drums are beaten, large and small, and there is playing of pipes, fifes, horns, trumpets, and bagpipes. What more shall I say? There was not a wicket or a gate kept closed; but the exits and entrances all stood ajar, so that no one, poor or rich, was turned away. King Arthur was not miserly, but gave orders to the bakers, the cooks, and the butlers that they should serve every one generously with bread, wine, and venison. No one asked anything whatever to be passed to him without getting all he desired.

(Vv. 2069-2134.) There was great merriment in the palace. But I will pass over the rest, and you shall hear of the joy and pleasure in the bridal chamber. Bishops and archbishops were there on the night when the bride and groom retired. At this their first meeting, Iseut was not filched away, nor was Brangien put in her place. 123 The Queen herself took charge of their preparations for the night; for both of them were dear to her. The hunted stag which pants for thirst does not so long for the spring, nor does the hungry sparrow-hawk return so

quickly when he is called, as did these two come to hold each other in close embrace. That night they had full compensation for their long delay. After the chamber had been cleared, they allow each sense to be gratified: the eyes, which are the entrance-way of love, and which carry messages to the heart, take satisfaction in the glance, for they rejoice in all they see; after the message of the eyes comes the far surpassing sweetness of the kisses inviting love; both of them make trial of this sweetness, and let their hearts quaff so freely that hardly can they leave off. Thus, kissing was their first sport. And the love which is between them emboldened the maid and left her quite without her fears; regardless of pain, she suffered all. Before she rose, she no longer bore the name of maid; in the morning she was a new-made dame. That day the minstrels were in happy mood, for they were all well paid. They were fully compensated for the entertainment they had given, and many a handsome gift was bestowed upon them: robes of grey squirrel skin and ermine, of rabbit skins and violet stuffs, scarlets and silken stuffs. Whether it be a horse or money, each one got what he deserved according to his skill. And thus the wedding festivities and the court lasted almost a fortnight with great joy and magnificence. For his own glory and satisfaction, as well as to honour Erec the more, King Arthur made all the knights remain a full fortnight. When the third week began, all together by common consent agreed to hold a tournament. On the one side, my lord Gawain offered himself as surety that it would take place between Evroic and Tenebroc: and Meliz and Meliadoc were guarantors on the other side. Then the court separated.

(Vv. 2135-2292.) A month after Pentecost the tournament assembled, and the jousting began in the plain below Tenebroc. Many an ensign of red, blue, and white, many a veil and many a sleeve were bestowed as tokens of love. Many a lance was carried there, flying the colours argent and green, or gold and azure blue. There were many, too, with different devices, some with stripes and some with dots. That day one saw laced on many a helmet of gold or steel, some green, some yellow, and others red, all aglowing in the sun; so many scutcheons and white hauberks; so many swords girt on the left side; so many good shields, fresh and new, some resplendent in silver and green, others of azure with buckles of gold; so many good steeds marked with white, or sorrel, tawny, white, black, and bay: all gather hastily. And now the field is quite covered with arms. On either side the ranks tremble, and a roar rises from the fight. The shock of the lances is very great. Lances break and shields are riddled, the hauberks receive bumps and are torn asunder, saddles go empty and horsemen ramble, while the horses sweat and foam. Swords are quickly drawn on those who tumble noisily, and some run to receive the promise of a ransom, others to stave off this disgrace. Erec rode a white horse, and came forth alone at the head of the line to joust, if he may find an opponent. From the opposite side there rides out to meet him Orguelleus de la Lande, mounted on an Irish steed which bears him along with marvellous speed. On the shield before his breast Erec strikes him with such force that he knocks him from his horse: he leaves him prone and passes on. Then Raindurant opposed him, son of the old dame of Tergalo, covered with blue cloth of silk; he was a knight of great prowess. Against one another now they charge and deal fierce blows on the shields about their neck. Erec from lance's length lays him over on the hard ground. While riding back he met the King of the Red City, who was very valiant and bold. They grasp their reins by the knots and their shields by the inner straps. They both had fine arms, and strong swift horses, and good shields,

fresh and new. With such fury they strike each other that both their lances fly in splinters. Never was there seen such a blow. They rush together with shields, arms, and horses. But neither girth nor rein nor breast-strap could prevent the king from coming to earth. So he flew from his steed, carrying with him saddle and stirrup, and even the reins of his bridle in his hand. All those who witnessed the jousting were filled with amazement, and said it cost him dear to joust with such a goodly knight. Erec did not wish to stop to capture either horse or rider, but rather to joust and distinguish himself in order that his prowess might appear. He thrills the ranks in front of him. Gawain animates those who were on his side by his prowess, and by winning horses and knights to the discomfiture of his opponents. I speak of my lord Gawain, who did right well and valiantly. In the fight he unhorsed Guincel, and took Gaudin of the Mountain; he captured knights and horses alike: my lord Gawain did well. Girtlet the son of Do, and Yvain, and Sagremor the Impetuous, so evilly entreated their adversaries that they drove them back to the gates, capturing and unhorsing many of them. In front of the gate of the town the strife began again between those within and those without. There Sagremor was thrown down, who was a very gallant knight. He was on the point of being detained and captured, when Erec spurs to rescue him, breaking his lance into splinters upon one of the opponents. So hard he strikes him on the breast that he made him quit the saddle. Then he made of his sword and advances upon them, crushing and splitting their helmets. Some flee, and others make way before him, for even the boldest fears him. Finally, he distributed so many blows and thrusts that he rescued Sagremor from them, and drove them all in confusion into the town. Meanwhile, the vesper hour drew to a close. Erec bore himself so well that day that he was the best of the combatants. But on the morrow he did much better yet: for he took so many knights and left so many saddles empty that none could believe it except those who had seen it. Every one on both sides said that with his lance and shield he had won the honours of the tournament. Now was Erec's renown so high that no one spoke save of him, nor was any one of such goodly favour. In countenance he resembled Absalom, in language he seemed a Solomon, in boldness he equalled Samson, [124] and in generous giving and spending he was the equal of Alexander. On his return from the tourney Erec went to speak with the King. He went to ask him for leave to go and visit his own land; but first he thanked him like a frank, wise, and courteous man for the honour which he had done him; for very deep was his gratitude. Then he asked his permission to leave, for he wished to visit his own country, and he wished to take his wife with him. This request the King could not deny, and yet he would have had him stay. He gives him leave and begs him to return as soon as possible: for in the whole court there was no better or more gallant knight, save only his dear nephew Gawain; [125] with him no one could be compared. But next after him, he prized Erec most, and held him more dear than any other knight.

(Vv. 2293-2764.) Erec wished to delay no longer. As soon as he had the King's leave, he bid his wife make her preparations, and he retained as his escort sixty knights of merit with horses and with dappled and grey furs. As soon as he was ready for his journey, he tarried little further at court, but took leave of the Queen and commended the knights to God. The Queen grants him leave to depart. At the hour of prime he set out from the royal palace. In the presence of them all he mounted his steed, and his wife mounted the dappled horse which she had brought from her own country; then all his escort mounted. Counting knights and